

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CU-02 AID-05 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-02

INR-07 L-02 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 /062 W

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P 182135Z MAR 75

FM AMEMBASSY MEXICO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6755

C O N F I D E N T I A L MEXICO 2402

E.O. 11652 GDS

TAGS: PINR, MX, US

SUBJECT: ECHEVERRIA'S MARCH 14 ALLEGATIONS RE CIA AT UNAM

REF: MEXICO 2337; MEXICO 2348

1. THE EVENTS SURROUNDING PRESIDENT ECHEVERRIA'S ABORTIVE ATTEMPT ON MARCH 14 TO REOPEN A "DIALOGUE" WITH STUDENTS AT MEXICO'S HUGE NATIONAL AUTONOMOUS UNIVERSITY (UNAM) HAVE FOR THE MOMENT TAKEN SECOND PLACE IN THE MEDIA TO THE VISIT OF VENEZUELAN PRESIDENT PEREZ. SENATE LEADER OLIVARES SANTANA, HOWEVER, ON MARCH 17 CALLED FOR AN INVESTIGATION OF THE MARCH 14 EVENTS (LINKING THEM WITH "EXTRANATIONAL INTERESTS"), TO BE DEBATED IN THE SENATE ON MARCH 20 DURING THE SAME SESSION WHICH WILL RECEIVE THE VENEZUELAN PRESIDENT.

2. PUBLIC STATEMENTS BY ECHEVERRIA AND OTHER OFFICIALS INDICATE THAT THE "AGITATORS" WHO CAUSED THE TROUBLE NUMBERED NO MORE THAN FORTY OR FIFTY. PRIVATE GOM INFORMATION, HOWEVER, SUGGESTS THAT SOME 500 PARTICIPATED IN THE DEMONSTRATION OF INTENSE OPPOSITION TO ECHEVERRIA'S VISIT. (U.S. NEWSMEN WHO WERE PRESENT ESTIMATE DEMONSTRATORS AT CONSIDERABLY HIGHER FIGURES. CONFIDENTIAL REPORTS ALSO INDICATE THAT UNAM RECTOR SOBERON DID NOT ANTICIPATE MUCH OPPOSITION TO THE PRESIDENTIAL VISIT (AND IS BEING BLAMED FOR HIS FAILURE TO FORESEE WHAT HAPPENED).
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EXCEPT FOR HIS INTERJECTIONS, ECHEVERRIA'S SPEECH AT UNAM --

VIRTUALLY SHOUTED DOWN AT TIMES --
SOUNDS MUCH LIKE HIS USUAL STYLE, EXHORTATORY
AND PLATITUDINOUS BUTCERTAINLY NOT CALCULATED TO ENRAGE
HIS UNAM LISTENERS.

3. WE BELIEVE THAT ECHEVERRIA WAS SURPRISED AND ANGERED
BY HIS UNAM RECEPTION. HE IS HARDLY ACCUSTOMED TO ANY-
THING OTHER THAN APPLAUSE. IT SEEMS LIKELY THAT HIS ATTACK
ON THOSE HECKLING HIM, LABELING THEM "FASCISTS," "MANIPU-
LATED BY THE CIA" RESULTED FROM HIS ANGER. CERTAINLY
ECHEVERRIA HAS EVERY REASON TO KNOW FROM HIS YEARS OF
EXPERIENCE AS PRESIDENT AND EARLIER AS SECRETARY AND SUB-
SECRETARY OF GOVERNMENT, THAT THE LIKELIHOOD OF CIA (OR
ANY OTHER USG) INVOLVEMENT IN THE DISTURBANCES WAS VIRTUALLY
NIL. HE PROBABLY CHOSE THOSE EPITHETS HE THOUGHT MOST LIKELY
TO WOUND HIS ATTACKERS WHICH HE MUST KNOW NOW -- IF HE DID
NOT AT THE TIME -- WERE OF THE EXTREME LEFT.

4. UNFORTUNATELY, ECHEVERRIA AFTER COOLING OFF HAS DONE,
AND PERHAPS CAN DO, NOTHING TO RETRACT OR SOFTEN HIS WORDS
WITHOUT APPEARING FOOLISH AND INTEMPERATE. THOSE WORDS,
FOR THE MILLIONS OF MEXICANS WHO READ NEWSPAPERS, WATCH TV,
OR LISTEN TO THE RADIO, REMAIN ON THE RECORD. MOREOVER,
SENIOR GOM OFFICIALS FELL QUICKLY INTO LINE (SEE MEXICO
2337). SECRETARY OF GOVERNMENT MOYA PALENCIA, WITHOUT
DIRECTLY REFERRING TO THE CIA, IN A SPEECH OF MARCH 15
LAUDING ECHEVERRIA ALLUDED TO "CACEROLISTA AND FASCISTOID"
TENDENCIES. "CACEROLISMO", WHICH REFERS TO THE "POTS AND
PANS" ATTACK BY CHILEAN WOMEN ON ALLENDE'S ADMINISTRATION,
IS A CODE WORD IN MEXICAN POLITICAL USAGE WITH STRONG
OVERTONES OF U.S. INTERVENTION.

5. BESIDES THE MANY GOM OFFICIALS, OTHERS WHO HAVE
RUSHED TO THE DEFENSE OF ECHEVERRIA AGAINST THOSE WHO AT-
TACKED HIM INCLUDE PRI PARTY OFFICIALS, LEGISLATORS, AN
ASSORTMENT OF NEWSPAPER COLUMNISTS, AND THE ALWAYS AVAIL-
ABLE CLAQUE (THE ORGANIZATION OF "REVOLUTIONARY ECONOMISTS,"
PEASANT GROUPS AND THE LIKE) WHICH PERFORMS ON DEMAND.

6. COMMENT: IN THIS INCIDENT, AS OTHERS, PRESIDENT
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ECHEVERRIA HAS SHOWN A DISTURBING READINESS UNDER STRESS
TO ATTACK "FOREIGN DEVILS" AND PARTICULARLY THE U.S.
EVEN MORE DISTURBING, IN A WAY, IS ECHEVERRIA'S FAILURE
EVER TO ADMIT ERROR AND THE WAY IN WHICH THE ENTIRE PRO-GOVERN-

MENT MEXICAN ESTABLISHMENT FALLS QUICKLY INTO PLACE
BEHIND HIM. THE SENATE DEBATE ON MARCH 20 MAY BRING NEW
ALLEGATIONS ABOUT THE CIA.

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptoning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PRESIDENT, ALLEGATIONS, PUBLIC ATTITUDES, POLITICAL SITUATION
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 18 MAR 1975
Decapton Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decapton Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: GolinoFR
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975MEXICO02402
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750094-0779
From: MEXICO
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19750341/aaaabkkd.tel
Line Count: 116
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION ARA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 75 MEXICO 2337, 75 MEXICO 2348
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: GolinoFR
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 10 SEP 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <10 SEP 2003 by BoyleJA>; APPROVED <11 SEP 2003 by GolinoFR>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
05 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: ECHEVERRIA'S MARCH 14 ALLEGATIONS RE CIA AT UNAM
TAGS: PINR, MX, US, CIA, UNAM, (ECHEVERRIA ALVAREZ, LUIS)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 05 JUL 2006